

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 00537 250945Z

46

ACTION NEA-13

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 0537

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT GR US

SUBJ: MINISTER TO PRIME MINISTER RALLIS' COMMENTS ON
GREEK POLITICAL SITUATION

IN MY MEETING WITH MINISTER TO THE PM CONSTANTINE
RALLIS JANUARY 24, HE MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS OF INTEREST:

1. GOVERNMENT WILL GO BACK TO DEMOCRACY BUT TIME WILL BE
NECESSARY TO PREPARE CONDITIONS. HE BELIEVES MUCH NEEDS
TO BE DONE TO DEVELOP AN ACCEPTABLE GREEK APPROACH TO
PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT. I OBSERVED THAT PERHAPS THE BEST
WAY TO PREPARE THE GREEK PEOPLE FOR SELF GOVERNMENT WAS TO
PERMIT THEM TO ORGANIZE POLITICAL PARTIES AND TO BECOME
ENGAGED IN THE MAJOR ISSUES OF THE DAY. RALLIS APPEARED
UNIMPRESSED AND CONTINUED TO STRESS INHERENT DIFFICULTIES
IN GREEK CHARACTER AND HISTORY TO EARLY ESTABLISHMENT OF
DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN GREECE. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE
ADDED THAT WHILE HE CONTINUED TO MAINTAIN HIS
FRIENDLY TIES WITH OLD POLITICAL WORLD, HE WAS NOT HOPEFUL
REGARDING ANY POSITIVE FUTURE ROLE FOR THE POLITICAL
LEADERS OF THE PAST.

2. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION ABOUT STUDENTS, HE SAID HE
THOUGHT THEY COULD BE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. WHEN PRESSED
ON WHAT COULD BE DONE SHE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT THE IMPORTANT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ATHENS 00537 250945Z

THING WAS TO PERMIT STUDENTS TO HAVE TRULY FREE ELECTIONS

SO THAT THEY COULD DEAL WITH THEIR OWN PROBLEMS. ALTHOUGH I DID NOT SAY SO, I FIND THIS APPROACH RATHER NAIVE FOR REASONS KNOWN TO THE DEPARTMENT.

3. HE SAID PRESENT GOG COMPOSED OF PATRIOTS DESIROUS OF HELPING GREECE. PROBLEMS WERE DIFFICULT BUT THEY WOULD DO THEIR BEST. HE EMPHASIZED GREEK SACURITY PROBLEM WITH THREE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES TO THE NORTH, AS WELL AS TURKEY TO THE EAST. HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN YUGOSLAVIA AFTER TITO, NOTING THAT VISIT TO THAT COUNTRY BY BREZHNEV AND KOSYGIN TOGETHER AT THE SAME TIME APPEARED OMINOUS. IN THIS CONTEXT HE WAS CERTAIN GREECE NEEDED TO BE DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH THE FUTURE OF THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION.

4. RALLIS EXPRESSED THE FRIENDLIEST ENTIMENTS TOWARD THE U.S. I SAID I APPRECIATED HIS COMMENTS, STRESSING THE GREAT IMPORTANCE THE U.S. ATTACHES TO FRYWENDLY AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONS WITH THE GREEK PEOPLE. I ALSO ADDED THAT I HOPE HE UNDERSTOOD THAT CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN GREEK DEMOCRACY WAS A UNIQUE AND DEEP-SEATED AFFAIR AND THAT WHATEVER ONE MIGHT THINK, THIS INTEREST WAS A FACT OF LIFE. THIS ATTITUDE STEMMED IN PART FROM OUR COMMON CULTURAL HERITAGE AND GREECE'S LASTING INFLUENCE ON WESTERN SOCIETY AS WELL AS COMMON TIES AND BONDS BETWEEN OUR TWO PEOPLES. RALLIS SAID HE DEEPLY APPRECIATED OUR COMMON CULTURAL HERITAGE AND INTERESTS AND HOPED U.S. WOULD CONTINUE TO PLACE A HIGH VALUE ON THESE RELATIONS.

5. COMMENT: MY IMPRESSION IN CONVERSATION WITH RALLIS IS THAT HE ATTRIBUTES OVERRIDING IMPORTANCE TO GREEK RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AS OF HIGH PRIORITY WNO GREEK

FOREIGN RELATIONS. HE ALSO GAVE ME THE IMPRESSION THAT RECENT EVENTS IN EUROPE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN HAVE ONLY SERVED TO CONFIRM THIS PRIORITY. RALLIS DID NOT GIVE ME THE IMPRESSION OF A STRONG LEADER WHO CAN BE COUNTED UPON TO PROVIDE THIS REGIME WITH OBJECTIVE AND FRANK ADVICE ON MATTERS OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS GOVERNMENT. TASCA

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ATHENS 00537 250945Z

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